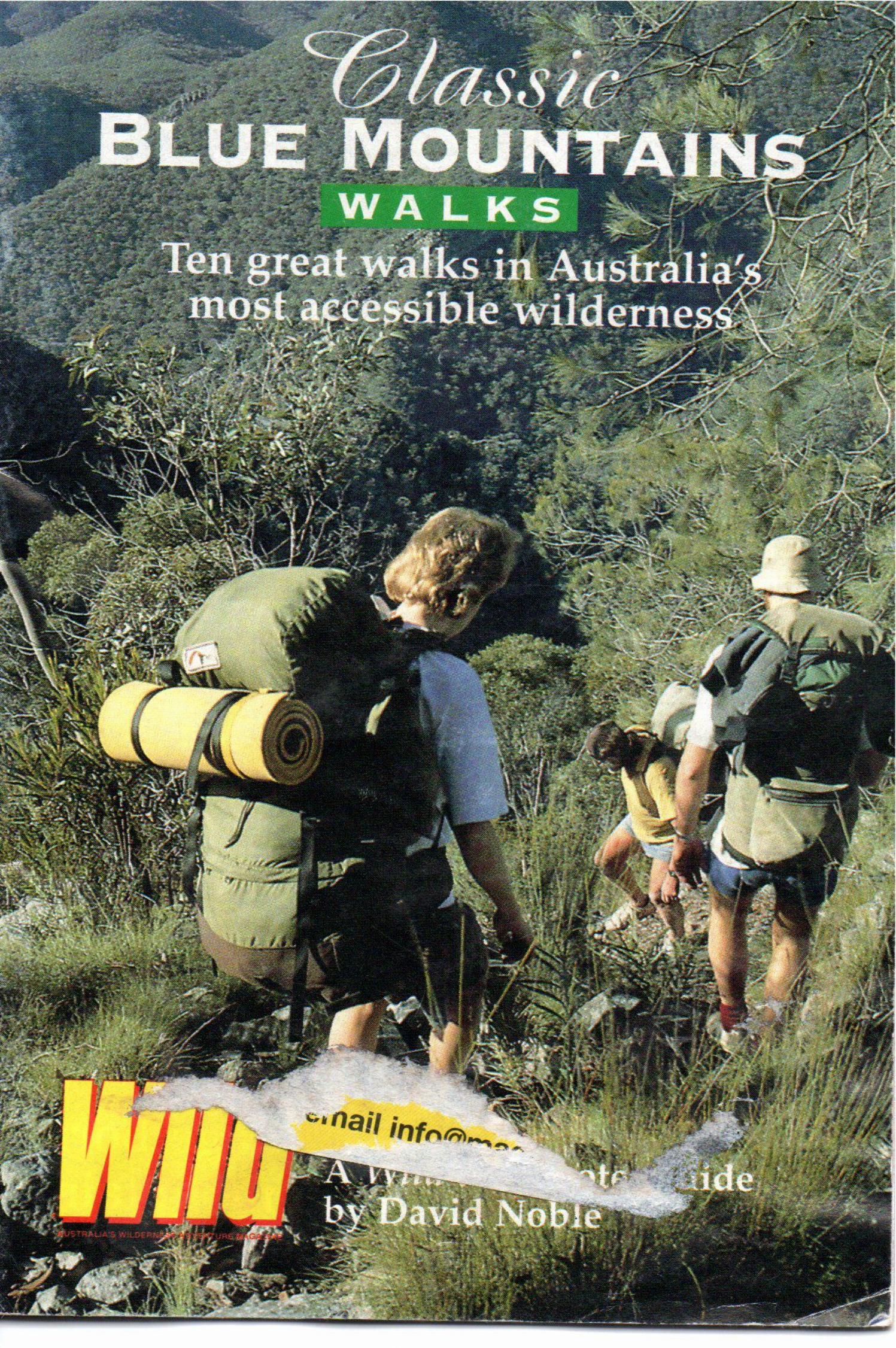




Classic **BLUE MOUNTAINS** **WALKS**

Ten great walks in Australia's
most accessible wilderness

Wild

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A wilderness guide
by David Noble

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MOUNTAIN DESIGNS
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A heritage born
of the mountains

Lower Kanangra Falls, Blue Mountains,
New South Wales. Photo David Noble.

Classic BLUE MOUNTAINS WALKS

Ten great walks in Australia's
most accessible wilderness

CONTENTS

Introduction	2
1 Kowmung River-Bulga Denis Canyon	4
2 Kanangra Walls-Mt Cloudmaker -Kanangra Creek	6
3 Blue Breaks Traverse	8
4 Coxs River-Wild Dog Mountains	12
5 Erskine Creek	16
6 Upper Grose-Blue Gum	17
7 Mt Hay-Mt Whitton Traverse	19
8 Rain Creek	21
9 Newnes Tops	23
10 Colo River-Angorawa Creek -Parr West-The Island	27

KEY TO MAPS

Road	
Vehicle track	-----
Walking track	- - - - -
Route	
Cliff, escarpment	~~~~~

Cover Bushwalkers descending Cambage Spire to the
Kowmung River. All photos David Noble

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INTRODUCTION

The Blue Mountains are a bushwalkers' paradise. Watching the sunrise from a camp on one of the area's many remote mountain summits while the frosty valleys below are shrouded in mist is an unforgettable experience.

In many places the passage of walkers over the years has created much-loved, classic walking tracks but in plenty of others there is no discernible sign of anybody having been there before. Two of the largest wilderness areas in New South Wales are in the Blue Mountains. The Colo Wilderness lies north of the Bell Road and stretches to the Hunter Valley. The Kangerang Wilderness encompasses both the Kowmung and Blue Breaks regions to the south. The Grose, a much smaller but no less spectacular wilderness area, separates them.

In all this country there is much to entice the bushwalker including an enormous diversity of vegetation, landforms and geology.

In compiling this guide I have tried to include walks to suit a wide range of walkers. Some are wholly (or almost wholly) on tracks while others are completely off tracks. Most walks are in rugged areas and a reasonable level of fitness is needed. Some can be completed quite easily in two days; others will take from five days to a week.

Where possible, modifications and alternative routes are suggested to allow for itineraries of greater flexibility.

Two of the walks included—Rain Creek and Newnes Tops—are not described in detail. Only general indications of the route and suggestions such as where to look for passes are given. The author feels that the descriptions of these wilderness walks should be sufficient for anyone experienced enough to venture into these areas.

Every bushwalker has a favourite and fondly remembered walk. What can make a walk special are the party members, particularly good weather, outstanding scenery and a host of other things. When a bushwalker keeps returning to one place over and over again you can be sure that the place is a special one. I have been on all these walks (with the exception of the Mt Hay–Mt Whitton one) many times.

Of course there are many other walks in the Blue Mountains that I could not include. The ten walks which follow were the 'best' of a long list and were selected for their diversity; they cover different parts of the Blue Mountains and vary in difficulty and duration. Some areas have been deliberately omitted—I would rather not see route information published for walks in the 'purest' wilderness. This applies to much of the northern Blue Mountains

GENERAL COMMENTS

'True right' and 'true left' refer to the banks of a river or creek when facing downstream (this is the usual convention). Some of the tracks mentioned have signs at major junctions and sometimes also markers on trees. Other tracks are described as 'unmarked'. In these cases a track has formed but there are no indications of turn-offs; where people have made mistakes and formed false tracks it can be difficult to work out which route is correct and here a bit more care and close attention to the map are required.

Many bushwalkers who visit the Blue Mountains do not carry a tent but rely on a lightweight fly for shelter. It is not uncommon to go on a five-day walk and sleep under the stars on most nights. In some areas, sandstone overhangs (camping caves) provide excellent shelter. There can be rain, strong winds and even light snow at any time of the year in the Blue Mountains and walkers should carry sufficient warm clothing even if it is kept in the

rucksack for the whole walk. During winter cold, still air can settle in the valleys at night so a good sleeping-bag is essential.

As a general rule it is better to walk gorges and creeks during the warmer months when daylight hours are longer and the sun higher. The boulders along creek-beds can be very slippery all day during winter. Ridge walking with high camps is better during the winter.

MINIMUM-IMPACT BUSHWALKING

Bushwalkers should at all times minimise their impact on the bush. Much of the Blue Mountains is pure wilderness, without tracks and route markers such as tape or cairns. Please keep it that way. The sheer size of the wilderness areas in the Blue Mountains and the number of places available for camping mean that cooking-fires can be used with less impact than in most other wilderness areas. However, after putting out a cooking-fire ensure that no sign of a fire-scar remains—cover the site of the fire with sand, dirt or dead vegetation. Do not ring fires with stones. Do not try to burn aluminium foil packets—even after very hot fires small pieces of foil remain visible for years and more appear every time it rains. Carry your closed-cell foam sleeping-mat inside your rucksack to avoid leaving trails of foam while walking through heath and other scrubby areas.

BUSHFIRES

The whole of the Blue Mountains is notorious for bushfires. These are not restricted to the height of summer. Bushwalkers must observe *all* total fire bans. Note that during fire bans even portable stoves cannot be used. During summer the Blue Mountains National Parks may often be closed to visitors due to the danger of bushfire. A phone call to a district National Park office

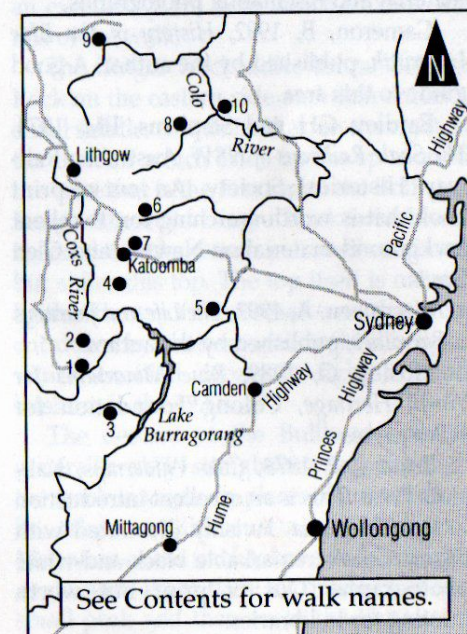
can be worth while. At all times of the year care should be taken fully to extinguish cooking-fires.

WARNING

Many of these walks venture into potentially dangerous areas. Walkers must be well equipped, with experience of how to use their gear properly. Persons who undertake these walks do so at their own risk. The notes in a guide like this are necessarily brief and walkers are encouraged to read the suggested references. Neither the publisher nor the author accepts any responsibility for injury or damages which result from using information in this guide.

MAPS

A number of the maps referred to in the walk descriptions which follow are either out of print or reprinted only occasionally. However, most are in regular circulation among New South Wales bushwalkers and should not be too hard to come by (this



particularly applies to the Myles Dunphy sketch maps). Other sheets, such as the *Gundungura Sketch Map* (published by the Sydney University Rover Crew) and the *St Albans* and *Blue Labyrinth* Department of Lands maps, may be harder to track down but it is worth while asking around until you succeed.

For each walk the appropriate 1:25 000 Central Mapping Authority map sheets have also been listed.

FURTHER READING

Barrett, Jim, 1993, *Coxs River—Discovery, History and Development*, published by the author.

ibid, 1993, *Kanangra Walls—Discovery and History*, published by the author.

ibid, 1993, *Kowmung River—Discovery, History and Development*, published by the author.

ibid, 1994, *Place Names of the Blue Mountains and Burratorang Valley*, published by the author. Jim Barrett's monographs provide a wealth of interesting historical material and fascinating photographs.

Cameron, B, 1992, *History of the Blue Labyrinth*, published by the author. A good guide to this area.

Eardley, GH and Stephens, EM, 1974, *The Shale Railways of NSW*, Australian Railway Historical Society. An out-of-print book that is worth searching for. Excellent background material on Newnes and Glen Davis.

Macqueen, A, 1993, *The Life and Journeys of Barrallier*, published by the author.

Mosley, G, 1989, *Blue Mountains for World Heritage*, Colong Foundation for Wilderness.

Prineas, P, 1978, *Colo Wilderness*, Kalianna Press. This is an excellent introduction to the Colo area, lavishly illustrated with Henry Gold's remarkable black-and-white photographs. Out of print but worth hunting for in libraries.

ibid, 1983, *Wild Places*, Kalianna Press. Also featuring Henry Gold's photographs, this book, too, is out of print but worth the search. Excellent chapters on Kanangra and the Colo.

Sydney University Rover Crew, 1970, *The Gundungura Guide*, published by the authors. This book is long out of print but worth searching for in libraries or friends' collections for the wealth of material it presents on the Kanangra/Kowmung area.

Taylor, G, 1958, *Sydneyside Scenery*, Angus and Robertson. An old book that is reprinted from time to time. An excellent introduction to the physical geography of the greater Sydney region. Includes good chapters on the Blue Mountains.

Thompson, P (compiler), 1986, *Myles Dunphy—Selected Writings*, Ballagrin. An essential book! Good material on the Kowmung, Mt Cloudmaker and the background to the landmark Blue Gum Forest campaign.

KOWMUNG RIVER— BULGA DENIS CANYON

The Kowmung is a jewel among rivers. It is a very special place. Few could visit it and not be affected by its exceptional beauty. High up, it flows through the rugged Morong Deep and Moona Loombah Canyons. After a more gentle section it flows through the Bulga Denis Canyon. Once out of this spectacular gorge the Kowmung settles down a little. It is still fast-flowing water but its banks are wider and grassy.

The Bulga Denis Canyon with its rugged setting and beautiful, clear pools separated by coruscating rapids is overlooked by impressive towering cliffs—it is an enticing place for bushwalkers. It is also difficult country although by no means severe.

Unless the river is high, crossing the Kowmung is easy in most places.

NATURE OF THE WALK

Duration: two or three days. A high level of fitness is required for the steep descent into and ascent out of the Kowmung Gorge (1000 metres). Most of the walk is on unmarked tracks. There is no track through the Bulga Denis Canyon and the banks can be steep and scrubby in places but otherwise the walking and route finding are generally straightforward. River crossings, sometimes entailing deep wades, are necessary.

WHEN TO GO

All year round. Spring and autumn are best. The river is delightful for summer swimming but the walk out is steep and is arduous on a hot day.

MAPS

Yerranderie and Kanangra 1:25 000 Central Mapping Authority (NSW) maps; *Gundungura Sketch Map* by the Sydney University Rover Club; and the *Kowmung Sketch Map* by Myles Dunphy.

ACCESS

The walk begins and ends at the Kanangra Walls car-park at the end of the Kanangra Road. This road can be taken from Jenolan Caves or reached by way of Oberon.

THE WALK

From the Kanangra Walls car-park head along the track to the Kanangra Plateau. After about 15 minutes, the turn-off track to the Gingra Range is reached. Without some scouting the tracks on the plateau can sometimes be tricky to pick up. They often disappear as they cross rocky areas and appear again in the heath on the other side. The Gingra Track leaves the main track in such a place and it is advisable carefully to check the map and to keep a close look-out for the turn-off. Before you head along this it is worth looking back into the head of the

Kanangra Gorge to see the mighty, and much photographed, Kanangra Falls. Kanangra Falls can also be seen tumbling down from near the car-park.

Continue south along the track towards the Gingra Range. At first the track passes through thick heath and provides good views of the surrounding area. About 50 minutes from the car-park the track enters a glade of eucalypts, crosses a swampy area and swings below a small cliffline. A short distance further on lies the Coal Seam Cave. Drinking-water can usually be obtained from buckets that collect the water which drips from its roof. This cave is reasonable for camping in but is more often used as a spot for a late lunch on the way out and provides good shelter in bad weather. It is also a good place to shed your rucksack and have a break on the way in but if the weather is fine and you haven't been in the area before it is better to go down the track for another few minutes to where a faint track turns off to the right and climbs to Cottage Rock. This spire is easily scaled and stands well above the trees. It is an excellent place from which to view the rest of the walk.

The Gingra Track sidles below Cottage Rock on the eastern side and then enters a small saddle. A little further, on the right, is the turn-off which leads up the spur on to the crest that is the first top of the Bullhead Range. The main Gingra Track (which will be used for the return journey) continues but sidles this top. The top itself is marred by the stumps of a few small trees that were cut down by chain-saw to build a helipad which enabled access to fight a small bushfire in the 1970s.

The descent of the Bullhead Spur is generally very straightforward although the track is vague in places. Care needs to be taken on the summit of Bullhead Mountain as the track takes a sudden right-angle turn. From there it continues over a small peak and then on to the impressive

Cambage Spire. This superb vantage-point overlooks the Kowmung valley. A variety of routes and tracks lead off the spire's steep, rocky top on to the ridgeline below. The most scenic one continues directly down steep but easy rock towards the Kowmung-Christys Creek confluence for about 50 metres and then traverses north (left) into a small gully. Once at the bottom of this gully the track continues descending and swings back right, on to the ridgeline. The descent to the river is steep and rocky but quite straightforward as long as you remain close to the crest of the spur and avoid false tracks.

Once at the bottom you can enjoy a delightful swim in the Kowmung River and a cool drink of its crystal-clear waters or those of Christys Creek, the large tributary that joins it. A number of campsites near the junction of the two streams could be used if you intend to spend three days on the walk.

Below this junction the Kowmung River enters the Bulga Denis Canyon. This rugged section of the river gets its name from the side-spurs to its east that mark the canyon's start and end. Quartzite bluffs can be seen both at river-level and well above it. Some of these—such as the aptly named Sunset Bluffs—are flaming red. Travelling through the gorge necessitates a few wades to avoid low-level bluffs but the river crossings are usually easy (except when the river is in flood). Good swimming-holes abound. The rapids on the river look enticing for a Li-Loing trip but walking is faster unless the river is high. Campsites are rare in this section of the river. Towards the end of the canyon there is a choice of two possible short cuts over low spurs to avoid meanders although sticking to the river is a pleasant alternative as it is flanked by grassy flats which provide excellent campsites. The king of these flats is at the base of Brumby Ridge and is overlooked by the towering Orange Bluff.

There are many routes for climbing back on to the Gingra Range. Faint tracks up both Brumby Ridge and Roots Ridge join the main Gingra Range Track. Other ridges are generally clear of scrub and provide reasonable routes. It is worth carrying some water with you as you leave the river.

Once back on the Gingra Range, the track can be followed back to the Kanangra Walls as it ambles over the various tops before reaching the Coal Seam Cave. From here, retrace your steps over the Kanangra Plateau to the car-park.

2

KANANGRA WALLS— MT CLOUDMAKER— KANANGRA CREEK

This walk features a classic high-level traverse of the Gangerang Range from Kanangra Walls to Mt Cloudmaker. Dramatically poised above the mighty gorge of Kanangra Creek, this range has outstanding views. Then follows a steep descent into the gorge to enjoy the pristine beauty, sparkling rapids and crystal-clear pools of Kanangra Creek after it emerges from the confines of the Kanangra Canyons. A steep ascent (and some willpower!) is needed to regain the tops.

NATURE OF THE WALK

Duration: two days. A high level of fitness is required for the steep descent into and ascent out of the Kanangra Gorge (1000 metres). The walk to Mt Cloudmaker is on an unmarked track. There are no tracks on the ridges used for access to Kanangra Creek although they are for the most part open and free of scrub. Walking along the open Kanangra Creek is delightful and entails numerous, easy, and refreshing, river crossings.

WHEN TO GO

All year round. Spring and autumn are best. Kanangra Creek is excellent for summer swimming in often deep pools but the walk out is steep.

MAPS

Yerranderie and Kanangra 1:25 000 CMA maps; *Gundungura Sketch Map* by the Sydney University Rover Club; and *Gangerang and Wild Dog Mountains Sketch Map* by Myles Dunphy.

ACCESS

This walk begins and ends at the Kanangra Walls car-park at the end of the Kanangra Road. This road can be taken from Jenolan Caves or reached by way of Oberon.

THE WALK

From the Kanangra Walls car-park head out along the track to the Kanangra Plateau. After about 15 minutes you will reach the turn-off to the Gingra Range. Do not take this turn-off but stay on the track that continues up over a small hill and keeps relatively close to the major cliffline. Without some scouting the tracks on the plateau can sometimes be tricky to follow: they often disappear as they cross rocky areas and start up again in the heath on the other side. There are superb views of the mighty Kanangra Canyons from the plateau. The epic grandeur of Kanangra Falls can be seen at the head of the Kanangra Gorge. Kalang Falls are harder to pick out tumbling down as a series of falls from near the car-park. Behind the twin Thurat Spires on the other side of the gorge lie Danae Brook and the Pookan Hole—the reputed 'den of the mist monster'. The Kanangra Walls area is notorious for thick mists; on one occasion the author was in a party negotiating thick mist on the plateau while returning from the Mt Cloudmaker Track and accidentally picked up the Gingra Track instead of the track back to the car-park. The mistake wasn't realised until the party was close to

the Coal Seam Cave—considerably out of its way! Such is the stuff of bushwalking legend. At the termination of the Kanangra Plateau the track drops into a fissure—Gordon Smith Pass, named after one of the pioneer bushwalkers of the Gangerang country. A few boulders in the pass are fairly easy to negotiate although some walkers may prefer to remove their rucksacks. Below the pass is a small camping cave and Aboriginal paintings. The track drops steeply on to the Kilpatrick Causeway and then skirts on the left (north-western) side of Crafts Walls. A few pinnacles near Mt Berry can provide some entertainment and the eagle-eyed may notice a few Aboriginal sharpening grooves near the track. There are more fine views as you cross the tiring Gabes Gap. The track continues, sometimes vaguely, near the crest of the ridge over Mt High and Mighty and Mt Stormbreaker. Rucksacks can be left at the summit of Mt Stormbreaker while Mt Cloudmaker is climbed as a side-trip. This entails an energetic wander over four bumps in the range—consonantly named Rip, Rack, Roar and Rumble by Myles Dunphy—before the true summit and log-book of Mt Cloudmaker are reached. Just near the summit are fine views back along the High Gangerang Range to Kanangra Walls unimpeded by scrub.

The untracked descent through light scrub from Mt Stormbreaker to Kanangra Creek is steep. Try to keep on the crest of the ridge (where there is one) and avoid going into any gullies. An alternative route to the creek favoured by those undertaking the famous 'Three Peaks' crossing (of Mts Cloudmaker, Paralyser and Guouogang) is to traverse the ridge from a point near Roar to just before Mt Marooba Karoo and then descend a fairly well defined and very open spur to Thunder Bend on Kanangra Creek. There are quite a few reasonable campsites near this part of the creek; some of them are a little way back from the creek

and can be hard to spot. Upstream, campsites are scarcer.

Kanangra Creek provides delightful walking upstream. Surely it would be hard to find purer water anywhere. As is always the case with creek walking, progress is slower than one expects and you need to watch the map carefully and identify the side creeks as you continue towards a spot to climb out. The best spur to ascend when climbing out of the creek is probably the open ridge to Mt Berry. Upstream, where Bourkes Buttress flanks Crafts Wall, is another route which is slightly scrubbier and not as blessed with views. From the top of either ascent, return to the Kanangra Walls along the way you came.

More capable parties may wish to vary this walk by forgoing the Kanangra Creek upstream walk and climbing from the creek on to Mt Paralyser. This ascent of 900 metres can be gruelling. Walk back along the Thurat Range until a faint track is picked up in the thick heath that leads to Mt Thurat. An old logging road can be followed from here to near the Kanangra Walls car-park.

3

BLUE BREAKS TRAVERSE

The Blue Breaks is a self-contained wilderness area within the southern section of the Blue Mountains National Park. It can be described roughly as the land that lies between the Coxs and Wollondilly arms of Lake Burragorang. It consists of a series of tablelands separated by gaps or 'breaks'. The high clifflines have excellent views. High-level traverses are some of the most scenically rewarding walks in the Blue Mountains. This outstanding walk visits Axehead Mountain and the Broken Rock Range—two of the finest parts of the Blue Breaks.

NATURE OF THE WALK

Duration: five-seven days (although fast parties not carrying much weight and familiar with the country could complete it in three days). The walk begins and ends at Kanangra Walls. Crossing the Kowmung Gorge necessitates long climbs. The Axehead traverse is a high-level one which requires good weather. This section entails some rock scrambling with full rucksacks. On one section of the route a knife-edge less than a metre wide that connects two peaks has to be crossed. Good route-finding skills can minimise problems. Pleasant creek walking in Green Wattle Creek is followed by a small gorge. The Broken Rock Range traverse is scrubby in places but straightforward. It can be steep getting on to the plateau of the range. Good route-finding and navigational abilities are required for this section of the walk as there are no tracks in the Blue Breaks. Several options for routes are given below.

This walk should only be undertaken by experienced walkers and the description which follows is therefore less detailed.

WHEN TO GO

All year round although the cooler months from Easter to October are best.

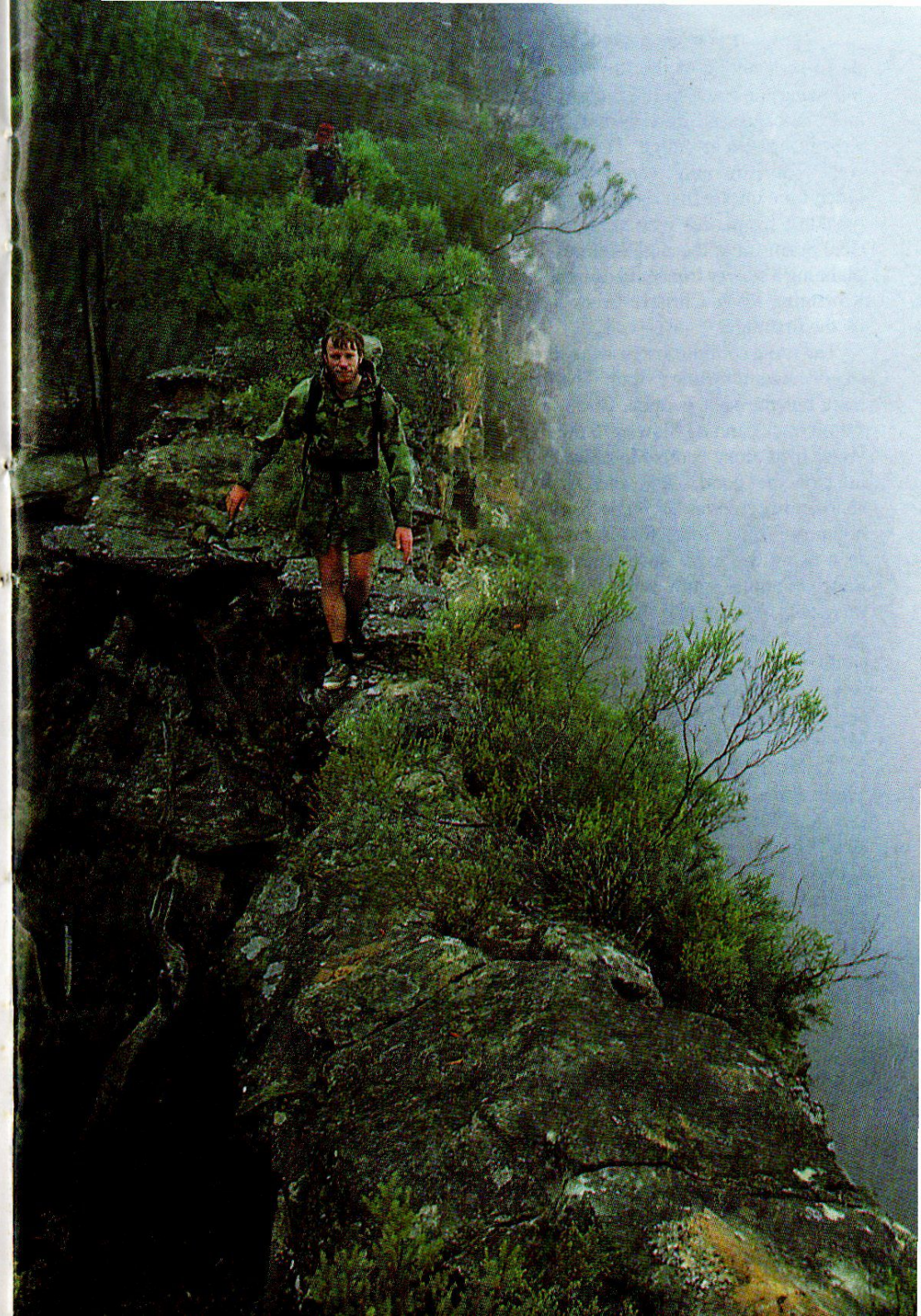
MAPS

Kanangra, Yerranderie, Bimlow, and Burragorang 1:25 000 CMA maps; and *Gundungura Sketch Map* by the Sydney University Rover Club.

ACCESS

The walk begins and ends at the Kanangra Walls car-park at the end of the Kanangra Road. This road can be taken from Jenolan Caves or reached by way of Oberon.

On the 'thin bit' on Vengeance Peninsula, Axehead Mountain traverse.



THE WALK

Begin by walking to the Kowmung River following the route to the Bullhead Range and Cambage Spire described above for the Kowmung River-Bulga Denis Canyon walk. The Kowmung can be reached by lunch-time on the first day (or even before breakfast by parties who walk out to the Coal Seam Cave the night before). Parties planning a slower trip could camp here (the Kowmung River-Christys Creek junction) on the first night.

The route continues across the river and steeply ascends Bulga Spur. There is no track but the spur is open. Once on top a vague track can be followed to the Sydney Water road along Scotts Main Range. Look out for the good view and Aboriginal sharpening grooves at Bugle Rock Look-out near Bulga Cone; fossils can also be seen along the spur. Once on Scotts Main Range continue south along the road and then head east towards Byrnes Gap. A few good, small campsites are hidden in the scrub near Butchers Creek. Water should be collected here (or at the next creek) for the section of the walk along Axehead Mountain.

Axehead Mountain can be climbed by heading directly up a gully in Gander Head just north of Byrnes Gap. A track terminates at the top of the first cliffline. (It does not continue along the range as shown on the *Yerranderie* 1:25 000 map.) Unfortunately, a nearby hut and clearing in Byrnes Gap significantly mar the view. A skyline traverse of the range can be undertaken all the way along Axehead Mountain to the junction of Butchers Shop and Bull Island Creeks. Good route finding is necessary to prevent the need for back-tracking. High camping is possible at or near spot heights 841 metres and 848 metres or in Green Wattle Gap. At some places water can be found in rock-pools after heavy rain. The climb to Bull Island Trig (spot height

815 metres) is steep. The 'thin bit' of the range is between the first two peaks of the last high section of the range (marked as Vengeance Peninsula on the *Gundungura Sketch Map*) and is of great interest. Getting off the last section is also steep (cliffs of dirt rather than rock!) and this is followed by a spur which is tricky to navigate all the way down to the junction of Bull Island and Butchers Shop Creeks. Note that an alternative route is to sidle Bull Island on the south, cross the gap to the isolated Bull Island Peak and then follow the ridge to Bull Island Gap. A section of this ridge—'the Razor Blade'—is interesting. Battle thick scrub in the gap towards Bull Island Creek and follow the creek down to the junction.

Green Wattle Creek starts at the junction of Bull Island and Butchers Shop Creeks. Good campsites are available both here and a fair way downstream on grassy flats amidst blue gums—paradise! Green Wattle Creek provides pleasant creek walking. Flats continue until a small gorge is reached. This is no great obstacle and culminates with a waterfall into a large pool. A short way beyond this a spur leading towards the north side of Green Wattle Break is taken.

To gain the plateau tops of the Broken Rock Range entails negotiating another short but very steep section known as 'the Cliffs of Dirt'. Once gained the tops provide superb views. A high-level traverse can be undertaken by staying generally close to the western cliffline eventually to reach and go beyond Mt Broken Rock. Many of the small, non-perennial creeks have good rock-pools (except during droughts when water should be carried on to the tops) and a high camp should be considered. Although it is possible to descend from the range near the middle (narrow) part it is

Looking south from the Broken Rock Range



worth while to traverse to the northern end of the range and on to a lower, narrow spur that heads towards the end of Butchers Creek. A route can be found on the many ridges that go into Butchers Creek (excellent camping) and then Scotts Main Range can be climbed.

The easiest access to the Kowmung is by way of the road to the Sydney Water gauging station that leaves from Bran Jan Hill. Alternatively, take any of the nearby ridges which lead to the Kowmung—they are generally easy and open. Good campsites can be found anywhere along this section of the river. From here one of the standard routes back to Kanangra Walls can be taken—Gingra Range (four to six hours); Gingra Creek, Pages Pinnacle (one day); or Ti-Willa, Mt Cloudmaker, Gangerang Traverse (one long day or one-and-a-half days).

4

COXS RIVER— WILD DOG MOUNTAINS

The Coxs River area is among the most pleasant bushwalking country to be found anywhere. Although many bushwalkers enter the Coxs River country from the Six Foot Track from Katoomba through the Megalong valley to Jenolan Caves, the river is much better downstream and further from the farms below the Galong Creek junction. The Wild Dog Mountains provide a scenic return walk. On the way back the bushwalkers' war memorial at Splendour Rock is encountered.

NATURE OF THE WALK

Duration: about five easy-medium days. This walk includes one large ascent (800 metres) up a steep, trackless but open spur. One route to the Coxs River entails some enjoyable rock scrambling to get round waterfalls. Most of the walk is on reason-

able tracks. The Coxs River is pleasant and easy to walk but numerous crossings are desirable to avoid bluffs. These crossings can be difficult and dangerous if the river is high.

WHEN TO GO

All year round. Water can be scarce in the Wild Dog Mountains during times of drought.

MAPS

Jenolan, Kanangra and Jamison 1:25 000 CMA maps; and *Gangerang and Wild Dog Mountains Sketch Map* by Myles Dunphy.

ACCESS

The easiest access is to drive from Blackheath down into the Megalong valley and then continue to 'Packsaddlers'—a farm also known as 'Green Gully'. The owners, the Carlon family, have lived in the valley for many generations and freely allow bushwalkers to pass through their property. They do ask a small fee for parking cars on their land. The walk described will start and end at the farm.

Alternative access using public transport (a train to Katoomba) and a road-bash along the Narrow Neck Peninsula is possible and does not add too much to the distance walked. Narrow Neck is a peninsula that juts out 12 kilometres from the Katoomba escarpment. Once it was a bushwalking Mecca but a road bulldozed along it in about 1960 greatly reduced its appeal. Many bushwalkers nowadays do the approximately two-hour road-bash along Narrow Neck (or 'Neck-bash') on the Friday night of a weekend walk. A locked gate at least prevents four-wheel-drivers from disturbing walkers. Narrow Neck is so named because it begins with a very narrow isthmus of rock. Half-way along it narrows again to form a second 'neck'. Not too far past this, on Bushwalkers Hill, is a fire tower—another by-product of the road. From here a track heads west to Carlons

Head and descent chains which provide access to the valley. The road continues for a few more kilometres (past a reliable water-soak at the bottom of a hill) to Clear Hill, the end of 'the Neck'. A track leaves from here and descends by way of Duncans Pass and Taros Ladders (a series of spikes) to Deberts Knob, Medlow Gap and the Wild Dog Mountains.

THE WALK

There are various routes to the Coxs River from 'Packsaddlers'. Two are straightforward. They both leave from the road that runs up the steep hill behind the farmhouses and stables to a saddle. From here a benched horse track drops south-east then south behind the saddle to follow Carlons Creek and eventually reach Breakfast Creek. The horse track continues all the way down Breakfast Creek, crossing it many times, to the Coxs River. Note that just downstream from the junction of Carlons and Breakfast Creeks a bushwalking track ascends steeply on to the Black Horse Range to join the main Wild Dog Mountains track. (This is one of the return routes.) Breakfast Creek has many charming pools, small bluffs and grassy flats suitable for camping. The section upstream from the Carlons Creek junction is seldom visited by bushwalkers but is well worth exploring.

Other tracks branch east and west from the saddle near the farm. The western track provides the second straightforward route to the river. It goes by way of Ironpot Ridge and Tinpot Hill to reach the Coxs just upstream from Flaggi Clear. Note that the eastern track climbs to join the Sydney Water road that heads to Medlow Gap and the track from Carlons Chains.

Another more difficult, longer, but much more scenic access route from 'Packsaddlers' to the Coxs River is down the rugged Galong Creek. Not far below the farm it flows through a small but very

pretty and spectacular gorge. The numerous small waterfalls can be scrambled down by agile walkers. (One of the waterfalls has an iron spike in place as an aid.)

The Coxs River is pleasant and easy walking all the way to its junction with the Kowmung. Numerous crossings are necessary to avoid bluffs. There are many campsites along the way. In the recent past it was unwise to drink water from the Coxs River and in particular from its major tributary—the Jenolan River. There have been improvements in the sewage treatment systems in the upstream parts of the Coxs catchment (the Lithgow and Jenolan Caves areas) and I have not heard of recent cases of walkers getting sick as a result of drinking this water. However, it may be wise to avoid drinking water from the main river by getting water from side creeks where this is possible.

A horse track can be followed along the true left bank of the Coxs River from Flaggi Clear all the way to the Breakfast Creek junction. Particularly impressive are the bluffs high above the river as it swings to join up with the Jenolan River. Camping is possible near Flaggi Clear (note that the clearing itself is private land) at the Jenolan River junction or on small flats a short way up the Jenolan River (but carry water from the Coxs River—it is probably cleaner).

The Jenolan River flows from Jenolan Caves. From the Coxs River it is worth exploring the small Lower Jenolan Canyon. This is a short trip from the Coxs-Jenolan junction.

Good campsites can also be found near the Breakfast Creek junction and on the large flats a few kilometres downstream, below the Blue Dog Spur. Below Merrigal Creek junction the classic Coxs River campsites—large, grassy flats—are scarcer until you are near the Kanangra Creek junction. West of this section of the Coxs River is the Krungle Bungle Range, the tops of which are often visited by bushwalkers.

The large flat at the confluence of the Coxs River and Kanangra Creek is known as Kanangaroo Clearing. When Kanangra Creek is first seen it often appears larger than one would expect given the size of its catchment. Indeed, one party of walkers a few years ago mistook it for the Coxs River and continued upstream expecting to find Carlon's Farm somewhere in the depths of Davies Canyon. (They were eventually found by helicopter.)

Kanangaroo Clearing should be reached on about the second night of the walk. It marks the half-way point for parties walking from Kanangra Walls to Katoomba and is a focal point for walkers visiting the Coxs River. Its large flats provide perfect campsites. Part of the flat on the western side is at present an inholding in the National Park. On this is a private shack. A short way up Kanangra Creek are very pleasant, smaller river flats that may be even better places for camping.

Between Kanangaroo Clearing and the Kowmung junction the Coxs River flows through the Gangerang Gorge. This is mostly easy walking and there are numerous campsites along here. Platypus have been seen in this section of the river.

There are many ascent routes from this part of the river on to the tops of the Wild Dog Mountains. A relatively easy horse track goes up the Yellow Pup Spur to Mt Yellow Dog. Steeper routes ascend Howling Dog Spur (often referred to as 'the Bitch'—it is an unrelentingly steep ridge!) as well as Brown Dog and Spotted Dog Spurs. Walkers who want to visit the lower Kowmung before leaving this area should choose the last of these, which provides a good route out. There are several campsites along the river near the bottom of this spur.

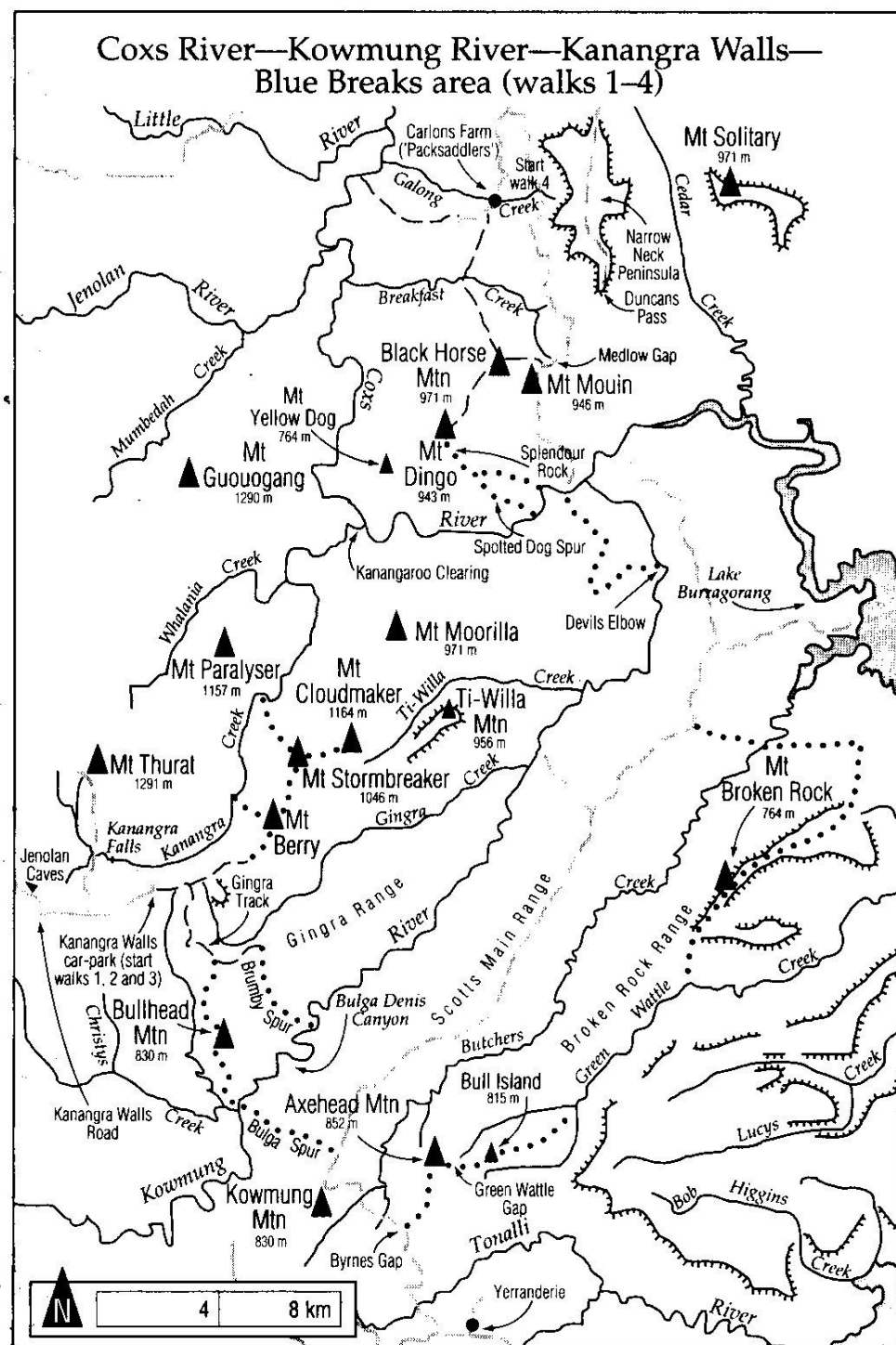
From the foot of Spotted Dog Spur it is a short distance downstream past the Sydney Water stream gauge and flying fox to the Kowmung junction. Sydney Water reach this part of the river by a road which runs

from Medlow Gap down the White Dog Spur. At the time of writing there is some doubt whether bushwalkers can legally visit the last section of the Kowmung River. New signs have sprung up on the White Dog Road warning bushwalkers to follow only a certain route. At the junction of the Coxs and Kowmung Rivers is a reasonable campsite which has been used by bushwalkers and fishermen for generations. A large swimming-hole in the Coxs River is very welcome in hot weather.

A good side-trip is to visit the spectacular lower gorge of the Kowmung—the Devils Elbow. It is slow but interesting walking. The bluffs that flank the river give the area a feeling of grandeur. There are a few small campsites just below this gorge and many good ones above it in the vicinity of Ritsons Elbow. A return could be made by climbing up on to the open tops of the Low Gangerang Range. Whichever way you go this climb can be a little scrubby but all the spurs leading from the Low Gangerang Range back to the Coxs River are quite open.

The Wild Dog Mountains consist of a row of peaks and the series of ridges from which they rise. The greatest relief is where the ridges drop into the Coxs River gorges. The ridges radiate out from the central peaks and each is named after a dog—Blue Dog, Brindle Dog, Yellow Dog and Yellow Pup, Howling Dog, Brown Dog, Spotted Dog, White Dog and Black Dog are the main ones.

Either Spotted Dog or the adjacent Little Dingo Ridge provides a good route to the Wild Dog Mountains from the lower part of the Coxs River. The initial climb is about 550 metres before the ridge levels out on a fairly open spur. This can be followed up to Little Dingo Hill where a faint track is encountered. Follow this track to Splendour Rock. Just before the rock the cliffline is breached with the aid of spikes and a chain



(Tommos Chains). Splendour Rock should be considered as a place for a high camp if you are carrying enough water. (Water can often be found after rain in rock-pools below and south of the rock.) From here there are excellent views of the Coxs valley and the Kanangra country and there is a log-book to record your comments.

The walk over the top of Mt Dingo and Mt Merrimerrigal to Warrigal Gap is straightforward and follows a track. From here a link track descends steeply to Mobbs Soak to meet the Yellow Dog to Medlow Gap horse track. There are good campsites and a large but gloomy camping cave at the soak. This is a popular camping spot and firewood is scarce. The water-supply is reliable except during severe droughts. The main track at Warrigal Gap continues north and climbs part of the way up Mt Warrigal before traversing along a ledge on the east (the 'Wombat Parade') to Black Horse Gap. It then descends to the north to join up with the horse track at the top of Black Horse Ridge. Note that the horse track is incorrectly marked on the *Jenolan* 1:25 000 map. It sidles from Mobbs Soak to the top of the Blue Dog Ridge and stays at the same low level to Kennel Flat to join the Medlow Gap Road just north of the Mt Mouin turn-off.

To return to 'Packsaddlers' follow either the Sydney Water road from Medlow Gap or a faint track on the Black Horse Ridge to Breakfast Creek (and then out by way of Carlons Gully and the route described earlier). A more strenuous option would be to traverse the Blue Dog Ridge (there is a worthwhile side-trip to Knights Deck—log-book and excellent view) and back down to the Coxs River. This ridge has a faint track all the way along it although in some parts it is easy to lose. Use the Breakfast Creek route to return to the farm. If you started at Katoomba, follow the track from Medlow Gap up to Narrow Neck as described under the 'Access' section above.

5 ERSKINE CREEK

The part of the Blue Mountains known as the 'Blue Labyrinth' lies south of the railway line between Glenbrook and Wentworth Falls and is constrained to the south by the stored waters of Lake Burragarang. This was a very popular area with bushwalkers before the Second World War. When cars were scarce, the nearby train made this region easily accessible for weekend walking. However, with the construction of a network of fire roads during the 1950s and 1960s it largely lost its appeal for bushwalking purists. Erskine Creek is one part of the labyrinth that has retained its attraction.

NATURE OF THE WALK

This walk can easily be completed in a day but the gorge of Erskine Creek provides such a pleasant place for a 'bludge' walk that it should be spread over two days. The walk starts on a good track to Erskine Creek, then the creek is followed upstream along sometimes rough river-banks until rock slabs provide more pleasant walking. Some excellent campsites can be found near large swimming-holes. The track out is steep and involves some easy scrambling.

WHEN TO GO

All year round. Superb swimming opportunities during the warmer months.

MAPS

Penrith 1:25 000 CMA map; and *Blue Labyrinth* two-inches-to-the-mile Department of Lands (NSW) map.

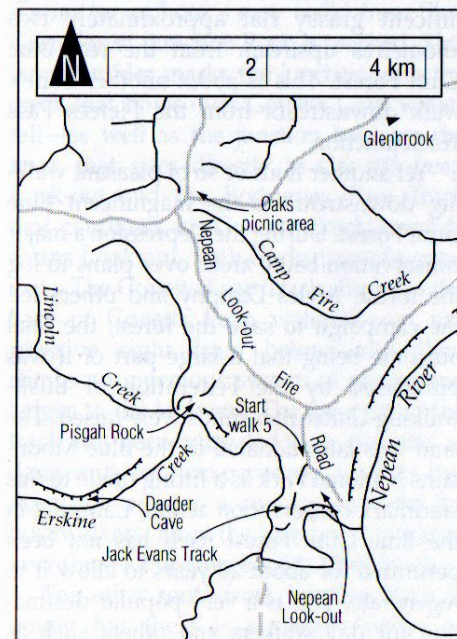
ACCESS

Travel from the Glenbrook entrance of the Blue Mountains National Park (entry fee or annual permit required for cars). Drive along a well-constructed road over the causeway in Glenbrook Creek and continue to just past the Oaks picnic area. From here turn off to the south along the road to

Nepean Look-out Fire Road. Park your car at the parking area for the Pisgah Rock Look-out (this is where the walk ends) and then walk a short distance further along the road to where the Jack Evans Track branches off to Erskine Creek.

THE WALK

The Jack Evans Track is well constructed and features some fine viewing platforms that overlook the gorge of Erskine Creek. Lower down the track splits into two branches that drop down to the creek on either side of a low saddle. Take the upstream (right-hand) branch. Erskine Creek at this point is a popular camping and picnic spot for Scouts and similar groups and shows signs of overuse. However, the creek provides good swimming—and interesting fossils can be found in a cave on the opposite side. At first some rough tracks continue upstream on the true left bank but they soon peter out and some boulder-hopping is necessary. It may be worth crossing to the true right bank (west-



ern side) in places. After heading upstream for an hour or two you will reach some large sandstone rock slabs. The creek meanders down the slabs in a series of shoots and sluices that can be good fun for those who have Li-Los.

Just upstream at the junction of Lincoln Creek is one of the finest swimming-holes in the Blue Mountains. A few campsites can be found nearby.

A steep track leaves from the junction and climbs to Pisgah Rock through a pass on the bluffs a little upstream towards the smaller side creek—Monkey Ropes Creek. This track is vague at times and care should be taken to stay on the correct route. From the top of the cliffs another vantage-point is reached (Pisgah Rock) and from here it is only a short distance back to the car-park along a wide track.

Before ascending, however, it is well worth while to walk further up the Erskine Creek gorge at least to the Dadder Cave (about half an hour upstream). Rock ledges on the true right (western) bank provide fast, pleasant walking. Camping is possible here or in other overhangs nearby.

6 UPPER GROSE-BLUE GUM

The Grose River and its impressive Blue Gum Forest in particular have long remained favoured destinations for walkers. The walk described here enters the Grose Gorge near Mt Victoria and leaves it by way of various routes near Blackheath. Some of the best sandstone scenery of the Blue Mountains is on display along this walk.

NATURE OF THE WALK

Although this walk is entirely on marked tracks it entails a steep ascent of about 700 metres. It can be completed comfortably in two days. Wash-outs can make the track

along the Grose River difficult to follow in places.

WHEN TO GO

All year round.

MAPS

Mt Wilson and Katoomba 1:25 000 CMA map; and *Central Blue Mountains Sketch Map* by Myles Dunphy.

ACCESS

This walk begins and ends at different places and it is therefore preferable to go there by train. Alternatively, two cars can be used to make a car shuttle or a car can be left at Blackheath and a train or taxi used to travel to the start of the walk. The walk begins where the Victoria Falls Road (a good-quality dirt road) ends. This road turns off to the north from the Great Western Highway just before it crosses the railway line about one kilometre east of Mt Victoria. If walking from Mt Victoria station, road-bash for approximately five kilometres to the look-out at the end of the road; this takes about an hour.

THE WALK

The track to Victoria Falls leaves from close to the look-out at the end of the Victoria Falls Road and steeply descends to the base of the impressive Victoria Falls. (This is a popular destination for day trippers.) A good track then follows the true right side of Victoria Creek to join the Grose River at Burra Korain Flat where there are pleasant campsites.

The Grose River is then followed on a roughly formed track that sidles on the true right bank all the way to Blue Gum Forest. It is easy mistakenly to follow one of a number of false tracks to get round wash-aways and if the track you are on seems to peter out it is worth scouting around to rejoin the main track.

Sections of the Grose River and its tributaries are seriously polluted and drinking-

water can be a problem. Victoria Creek itself has little development in its catchment and its water is okay to drink. The Grose River has some coal-mine development near its source and near the Victoria Creek junction the author has observed that it contains a lot of black sediment from time to time. Downstream, sewage treatment works are at the heads of Hat Hill and Arethusa Creeks and it is best not to drink the water in the main river below these creek junctions. Sensible inspection of a map should reveal whether water from a side creek can be safely drunk. If you are not sure, drink the water from the main river but boil it first.

It is a long half-day's walk down the river to Blue Gum Forest. The many excellent swimming-holes are a pleasant diversion. About two hours' walk below Burra Korain Flat the Pierces Pass Track turns off to the north. As camping is not permitted at Blue Gum Forest it is better to camp somewhere along the way. Many campsites can be found on small flats but the best one is at 'Little Blue Gum', a magnificent grassy flat approximately two kilometres upstream from the real Blue Gum Forest. This is about another hour's walk downstream from the Pierces Pass Track junction.

Yet another hour or so of pleasant walking downstream is the magnificent Blue Gum Forest. During the Depression a major conservation battle arose over plans to log the forest. Myles Dunphy and others led the campaign to save the forest, the final outcome being that a large part of it was purchased by the Federation of Bushwalking Clubs after funds were raised. The land was later donated to the Blue Mountains National Park as a fitting finale to this landmark conservation action. Camping in the Blue Gum Forest itself has not been permitted for about 20 years to allow it to regenerate. This is a very popular destination for day walkers and others such as

Scout groups. Camping is allowed further down-stream on the Grose River and at Acacia Flat, a short distance up Govetts Creek.

The main track goes on past Blue Gum Forest towards Acacia Flat and then continues on the true left of Govetts Creek. From Blue Gum Forest two alternative routes directly leave the valley. One track climbs steeply through rain forest to Perrys Look-down. This is the shortest and easiest way into and out of the Blue Gum Forest area. From the look-out at the top it is approximately eight kilometres back to Blackheath by way of the road. The other alternative is a track that climbs up a steep buttress on the other side of Govetts Creek to a place known as Lockleys Pylon, from where good views can be obtained. From the clifftops it is about four kilometres to the Mt Hay Road and then another ten kilometres or so to Leura.

It is better to stay in the valley and continue going upstream along Govetts Creek. One section entails a high sidle above a steep wash-out. About four kilometres (or an hour's easy walk) from Blue Gum Forest, Junction Rock is reached. This large boulder marks the junction with the creek that flows over Govetts Leap waterfall—as well as the junction between the track that goes directly to Govetts Leap Look-out and the Rodriguez Pass Track that continues up Govetts Creek towards Evans Look-out. Both tracks provide good exits. The Govetts Leap Track climbs to the base of Govetts Leap waterfall—an impressive sight from below—and then climbs an ingenious system of connecting ledges to the look-out. The top part of the track has been subjected to a slip and is dangerous for inexperienced tourists but does not present a serious obstacle for bushwalkers. From the look-out it is a little over three kilometres back to Blackheath.

The other route from Junction Rock is longer but there is a wider variety of

scenery, especially if you take the option of visiting the Grand Canyon. Continue up the true left bank of Govetts Creek to Syncarpia (the Greaves Creek junction). The main creek flows out of Arethusa Canyon further upstream while Greaves Creek flows out of the Grand Canyon. On the way to Syncarpia a less scenic exit follows a track directly up to Evans Look-out. However, it is better to continue up Greaves Creek past the pretty Beauchamp Falls (and past another direct route up to Evans Look-out) through the narrow confines of the Grand Canyon. Here the track is poised spectacularly on a set of ledges above the dark, narrow slot of the canyon and is almost a work of art—an excellent example of the track-makers' craft. This track comes out along the Evans Look-out Road, about five kilometres from Blackheath.

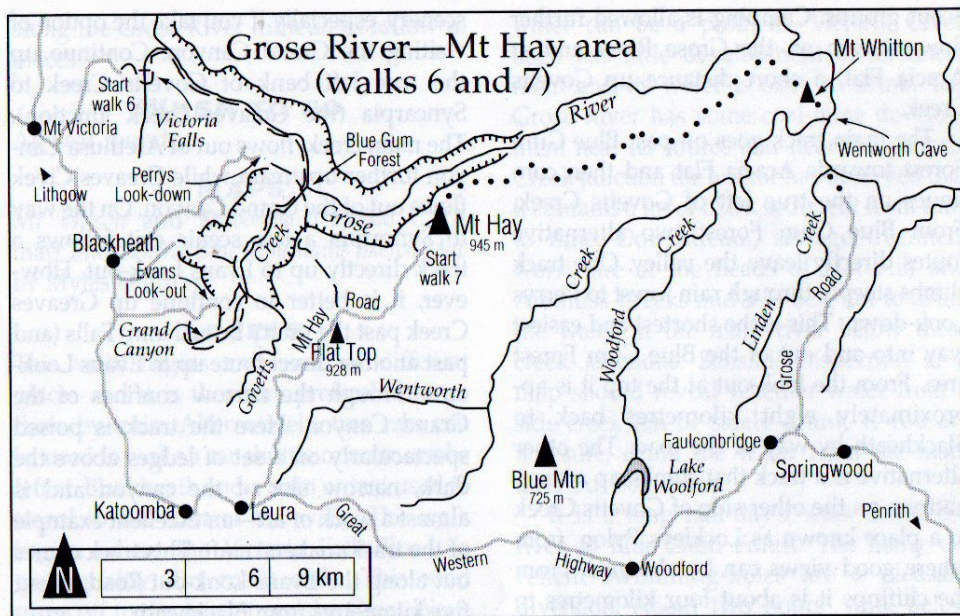
7

MT HAY— MT WHITTON TRAVERSE

This is a seldom done but classic walk through the heart of the rugged Grose Wilderness.

NATURE OF THE WALK

The walk can just be fitted into a weekend by a small, fast and experienced party. Other groups could well take an extra day. Bushfires in the area a few summers ago may have reduced the scrub and made some of the walking easier. Being a through trip it is best to use public transport (with road-bashes at the start and end) or to employ a car shuttle. There is a road and then a track to the summit of Mt Hay. Beyond this lies an untracked, scrubby labyrinth of ridges that terminate at their furthest point at the humble Mt Whitton, just above the Grose River–Wentworth Creek junction. After negotiating a steep,



scrambling pass, the walk follows a relatively straightforward route to the Springwood-Faulconbridge area. This walk is suitable for those who don't mind some scrub, some route finding and lots of tricky navigation.

WHEN TO GO

Spring and autumn are best.

MAPS

Katoomba, Kurrajong, Mt Wilson and Springwood 1:25 000 CMA maps; and *Central Blue Mountains Sketch Map* by Myles Dunphy.

ACCESS

The starting-point is the Mt Hay road which leaves the Great Western Highway near Leura. It is a reasonable dirt road until near the Fortress Ridge. From there on it may be difficult for two-wheel-drive vehicles to negotiate. This road can be walked on the Friday night of a weekend by a party using the train for transport. The walk ends on Grose Road, which leaves the

Great Western Highway at Faulconbridge. This road, too, is rough going for two-wheel-drive vehicles.

THE WALK

The walk along the Mt Hay road is straightforward. From the end of the road a track climbs up to the summit of Mt Hay. There are good views of the Grose valley along the way. The walk now proceeds off the peak through light scrub and small cliff-lines north-east to the Boorong Crag. The walking is uncomplicated at first but further along the ridge some of the saddles become scrubbier—with lawyer vine and other delights. No doubt the bushfires of January 1994 will make this section easier for a few years.

It is a lengthy walk all the way along this ridge to Mt Whitton. Water will probably have to be carried if you intend to make a high camp. Rock-pools can be found on some of the tops after rain but they cannot be relied upon. A close watch should be kept on your map and compass all the way. This ridge is very committing!

It is probably 20 kilometres from Mt Hay to Mt Whitton and there are no easy exit routes. Any navigational mistakes could be very costly in time. The scrub along the ridge is not completely unrelenting—the white-shaded sections on the map are often interesting, rocky areas. This section of the walk takes a very long time to complete. A small, fast party and a very early start will help.

Once Mt Whitton is reached the ridge can be followed right down to the Grose River—Wentworth Creek junction. The last section of the descent intersects a cliff-line just before the creek but with good route finding a pass can be discerned very close to the junction.

At the junction is a large camping cave (Wentworth Cave) which is a good place for a lunch-spot on the second day. Then follow the overgrown Engineers Track down the Grose River on the south (true right) bank for about two kilometres to the Linden Creek junction. From here follow the ridge upwards, ending with some easy scrambling to Faulconbridge Point Look-out and Grose Road.

8

RAIN CREEK

This is a worthwhile walk into some of the finest country in the northern Blue Mountains. Being in remote wilderness it is suitable for experienced walkers familiar with route finding in untracked country, navigating in thick scrub and negotiating steep cliff-lines.

Rain Creek is deep within the Wollangambe Wilderness section of the Blue Mountains National Park. Not so many years ago, when surveyors used plane-table techniques, it was believed that most of the major streams of the Wollangambe Wilderness—such as Bungleboori, Nayook and Rain Creeks—flowed north into the

aply named Main Creek which, in turn, flowed into the Colo River. However, when aerial photography became common in the 1940s it was realised that all these creeks flow eastward into the Wollangambe River. Main Creek was thus found to be relatively minor.

In the heart of this country lies Rain Creek. It has the attraction of being mysterious and remote. Some of the nearby creeks are deep, dark canyons while others are boulder- and scrub-choked gorges. Visit Rain Creek as part of an extended walk into the Wollangambe Wilderness and see what it is like: you won't be disappointed!

NATURE OF THE WALK

Duration: three-five days. This walk is suitable only for experienced walkers familiar with walking in scrubby, untracked country and with navigating by compass. Depending on the route chosen, it may be necessary to undertake a reconnaissance trip into the area to identify the initial passes. Rock-scrambling ability and boulder-hopping agility with a rucksack are necessary. The size of your party should be small—two to four walkers—as spacious campsites are rare. With ingenuity, passes through steep cliff-lines can be found and thus abseiling gear is not essential but at least 20 metres of rope are handy for pack-hauling. The approach and the walk out involve scratchy scrub so gaiters, long pants and leather gardening-gloves should be considered. Materials to waterproof a rucksack for swimming should always be carried in the Wollangambe Wilderness. Be warned!

WHEN TO GO

Ridge walking in the Wollangambe Wilderness is best done during the cooler months but this is also the time when the creeks should be avoided. The sunlight rarely penetrates to the floor of the gorges during winter; consequently the boulders and ledges are very slippery and not only

the area's canyons sometimes require unexpected compulsory swims. March–April and October–November are probably the best months. Easter is usually an ideal time for this type of walk.

MAPS

Wollangambe, Rock Hill, Colo Heights and Mountain Lagoon 1:25 000 CMA maps.

ACCESS

Rain Creek lies in the heart of the Wollangambe Wilderness so theoretically access could be from any point on the periphery. However, one important consideration when visiting creeks such as this is that the vegetation in the creek-bed often points downstream. This means that it is best to walk down the creeks. The headwaters of Rain Creek can be reached from Mt Irvine or the nearby Mt Wilson (from the Bell Road) or by way of a long ridge walk from the fire roads of the Newnes Plateau that terminate near Deep Pass.

THE WALK

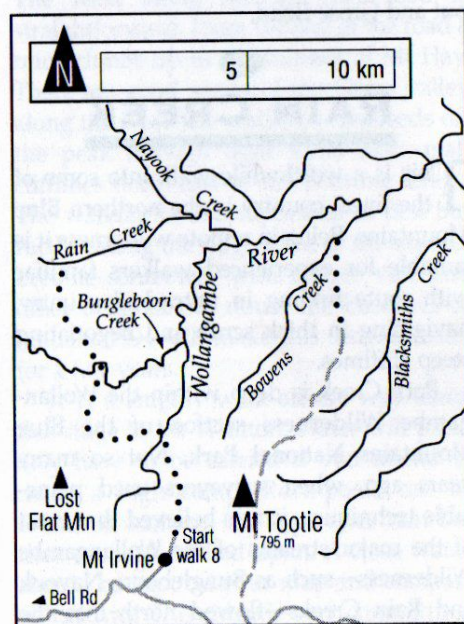
As this walk traverses the relatively pristine Wollangambe Wilderness a definite route and itinerary will not be given. The following information should be sufficient to enable walkers to enjoy this marvellous area.

Although it is possible to complete the trip from Mt Irvine to Rain Creek and back in a long weekend most parties will take longer. Routes from Mt Irvine, although shorter, entail crossing the Wollangambe and Bungleboori Gorges—both daunting obstacles. It may be wise to scout out passes on preliminary trips. Between these formidable gorges lies the northern part of Lost Flat Mountain. Here the ridges are covered in thick, scratchy scrub and are so vague that it is very difficult to pick up the lie of the land. Very careful compass navigation is necessary and there is often an element of 'dead reckoning' (for example, walking on a certain bearing for a given

time or number of paces). Magnetic rock is also present to play havoc with your bearings and add to the fun.

Rope for pack-hauling may be needed when crossing the gorges. Good places to look for passes in the Wollangambe are near Tesselate Hill and Pavements north of Mt Irvine. Bungleboori Creek below its junction with Short Creek is a majestic gorge with many interesting features and is another worthy goal for bushwalkers. There are several tricky passes in this area. Walkers familiar with the territory can reach upper Rain Creek in one long day from Mt Irvine but most would probably only get as far as Bungleboori Creek for their first campsite.

The alternative approach route to the head of Rain Creek starts at the pine plantations of the Newnes Plateau. Fire roads reach to near Deep Pass or Deep Pass Clearing and from the nearby Mt Norris it is possible to go along relatively easy ridge country to Rain Creek. More than one day may be needed. Campsites and water can be found in the interesting Valley of the



Swamps. This ridge system still requires careful navigation but it is generally less vague than the Lost Flat area.

Once in Rain Creek you will be able to appreciate the delights of the region after the long walk in. The section of Nayook Creek not far below its junction with Rain Creek is a must. Towering cliffs and broad, rocky slabs make it a most remarkable place.

Climbing out of the lower Nayook or Wollangambe Gorges is challenging too. It is possible to traverse down the Wollangambe River to where it joins Bowens Creek and climb out to the east. The ridge that separates the Wollangambe River from Bowens Creek can also be scaled and traversed back to Mt Irvine.

9

NEWNES TOPS

The area around the deserted mining town of Newnes is a good base for a variety of walks. Favourite ones include trips down the Wolgan River and trips along the route of the old railway to the 'Glow-worm Tunnel'. Another popular walk is that to the companion ghost town of Glen Davis in the neighbouring Capertee valley by following the old Pipeline Track connecting the two towns. However, some of the most remarkable features of the Newnes area are on the tops between the old townships. A bewildering array of chasms, arches and rock pagodas can be found on these plateaux. Walkers should be aware of the delicate nature of most of these rock formations. Brittle concretions of rock can be snapped off by carelessly placed feet and the consequent scars can be very disfiguring.

NATURE OF THE WALK

Duration: at least two–three days can be profitably spent exploring the tops. No detailed route will be given to minimise

track formation in this largely untracked area. Some rock-scrambling may be required to cross chasms and bypass pagodas. Although no specific routes or tracks to follow are given, this is a place where walkers who have not done much off-track bushwalking could gain experience. Scrub conditions and route finding are generally easier than in other places in the northern Blue Mountains.

WHEN TO GO

This region is best visited during the cooler months. Water may have to be carried for a high camp.

MAPS

Ben Bullen and Mt Morgan 1:25 000 CMA maps.

ACCESS

Newnes lies on a road that branches off the Lithgow–Mudgee Road near the Wallerawang Power-station at the small town of Lidsdale. A long, mainly dirt road is followed over a rim into the Wolgan valley. The Wolgan, Capertee and Grose valleys are 'bottle-shaped'. They are fairly wide high up but narrow considerably further downstream to flow through deep gorges. Newnes lies a little way down the 'neck' of the bottle, 34 kilometres by road from Lidsdale.

THE WALK

Newnes was once a source of kerosene shale. It was the site of a number of mines and a great deal of industrial activity. During the Depression most of this activity ceased. All the town's houses have been removed but old coke ovens and retorts can be seen downstream of the town site. A branch railway line entered the valley at one time. With fuel in short supply during

Pages 24 and 25. Bushwalkers on top of a pagoda, looking down to the Capertee valley from the tops above Newnes.



the Second World War mining started up again, not at Newnes but at the nearby Glen Davis. Kerosene oil was distilled there, pumped by pipeline to Newnes and then to the main western railway line at Newnes Junction. For many years the Newnes pub was the only building still inhabited and during the 1960s and 1970s it became a focal point for bushwalkers, rock-climbers and other visitors to the valley while its publican, Jim Gale, was still alive. Floods seriously undermined the pub's foundations during the 1980s and it was moved slightly up the river to a higher site. The building is now a general store. A few hundred metres downstream from the pub is the site of the old township. The railway station was across the river on the south side. The whole area is now popular with car-camping groups all year round.

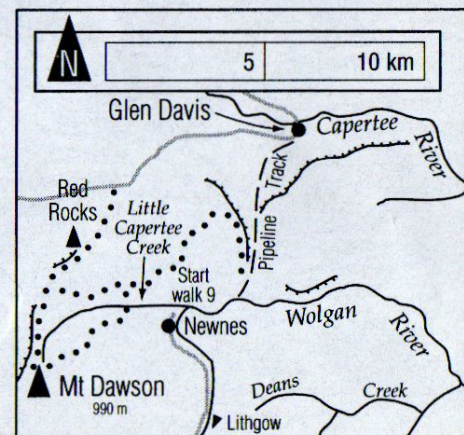
One of the routes by which to reach the tops above Newnes is Little Capertee Creek, which runs into the Wolgan at the old town site. A road goes up this for about 1.5 kilometres to a farm. A small tributary creek to the south of Little Capertee Creek at this point provides a number of passes on to the tops. Back at the main creek just upstream from the farm a smaller tributary entering from the north also provides a pass on to the main divide between Newnes and Glen Davis. Alternatively, Little Capertee Creek can be followed to near its source and the tops scaled from there. Be warned that this creek becomes non-perennial not far upstream from the farm. Further upstream it emerges from a miniature canyon. Permanent water can be found in some of the plunge-pools in this canyon. With care, an old road or bridle track can be followed a fair way upstream from the flat just above the farm on the true left bank. This may have been part of an old stock-route to the Capertee valley.

Much of the tops is covered in pagoda-like rock formations. Frequently these are rent by chasms that can make forward

progress interesting to say the least. Some good examples are to be found along the ridges that radiate out from Mt Dawson. There is also some tough, wiry heath which can often make for slow going but it generally doesn't extend for a great distance. The side-spur that juts out to the north—known as the Red Rocks—is a favourite with bushwalkers and can be traversed all the way to the Capertee valley. The main divide can also be crossed between the Capertee and Wolgan valleys from the head of Little Capertee Creek to the Pipeline Track. One peak along the way is a little tricky to climb.

The Pipeline Track is not marked on the *Mt Morgan* map but climbs a face about 1.5 kilometres downstream of Newnes. Follow the road on the true left side to just downstream from Petries Gully. The track begins with a small set of brick steps, then climbs steeply on to the tops and goes down Green Gully to near Glen Davis. Alternative routes to the tops are up some of the tributaries of Petries Gully, one of which has an interesting old railway formation going through a small canyon.

There are many good campsites along the tops. Some are in saddles or sheltered between pagodas. If the weather turns wet, it is usually easy to find a sandstone overhang in which to shelter.



10 COLO RIVER— ANGORAWA CREEK— PARR WEST— THE ISLAND

The Colo is the most spectacular sandstone gorge in New South Wales. As there is no easy access to its rim, it has remained in a wilderness setting. Steep cliff-lines and tenacious prickly scrub do their best to repel all but the most determined visitors. Few passes into or out of the main gorge are easy. Most require rock-scrambling and a rope is often handy.

NATURE OF THE WALK

Duration: two days. This is a long, rough walk in difficult wilderness country. Boulder-hopping and some creek-wading are necessary on the first day. A steep, scrambling pass must then be negotiated to leave the Colo Gorge. Ropework is not required but a pack-hauling rope may give comfort to some parties. Then follows a walk above the rim of the gorge in typical Colo scrub—long pants and/or gaiters and leather gloves are not essential but should be considered. Views are excellent and compensate for the difficulties. Walkers embarking on this trip should be able to navigate using a map and compass when visibility is hampered by scrub. While parties undertaking 'hard' weekend walks to the more inaccessible ridges and gorge tributaries on the western side of the Colo are not uncommon, the difficulties of any Colo walk should not be underestimated.

WHEN TO GO

Spring and autumn are best. The boulders in the side creeks are often slippery during winter—slowing down travel—and the tops are too hot for summer scrub-bashing.

MAPS

Colo Heights 1:25 000 CMA; *Colo Sketch Map* by Bob Buck; and *St Albans* 1:63 360 (for historical interest).

ACCESS

The walk begins and ends on old logging roads and fire roads accessible from the Putty Road. Travel up the Putty Road from Windsor to the old logging road located at grid reference 860107—about seven kilometres from Colo Heights. This road heads west to intersect tributaries of Angorawa Creek. A few hundred metres from the main road, a road not marked on the maps turns off to the south and climbs to link up with the Drip Rock fire road. This will be used for the return walk. Note that this link road is very steep and is not suitable for most vehicles. The Drip Rock fire road passes through private land at its eastern end and has locked gates.

THE WALK

Angorawa Creek just before its junction with the Colo River provides superb walking on rocky slabs surrounding beautiful swimming-holes. Massive cliffs flank the creek as it meanders for these last few kilometres. Upstream the going can be rough with boulders and scrub—including some unpleasant lawyer vine—to be negotiated. There are many routes into Angorawa Creek. It is not too difficult to keep going along the old logging road down New Yard Creek until it peters out. (It continues down the creek a little further than is indicated on the map but is very overgrown.) Fairly slow creek-walking follows. It takes a long day to reach the Colo.

Alternative ways into Angorawa Creek lie off the Drip Rock road. The ridge system can be followed from the fairly nondescript Drip Rock top to Pass 23 (on the *Colo Sketch Map*) or along any of the shorter ridges just south of Drip Rock to enter a large tributary of Angorawa Creek. This provides reason-

able walking and features some interesting caves along the way.

As mentioned above, it's the last part of Angorawa Creek which is worth visiting. Walking is fast along open slabs. Small waterfalls and truly towering cliffs surely make this one of the grandest places in the Colo region. (It is an interesting exercise to compare the path of the last part of the creek as shown on the old *St Albans* inch-to-the-mile sheet with that shown on modern maps. The old sheet is a good example of poor mapping.) Small campsites can be found at the Colo junction, usually on sandbanks.

On the second day the steep cliffs of the Colo must be climbed. Bob Buck's *Colo Sketch Map* refers to Pass 22 as 'steep ridge, tricky; experienced scramblers; rope for pack-hauling'. It is more of a face than a ridge. The route leaves directly from the Colo River-Angorawa Creek junction taking a line towards Parr West to the south-east. Like many Colo passes, the route looks unlikely from below. As you climb there are a number of possible routes to follow. The major obstacles are small cliff-lines which can be breached by way of good ledges between them that allow you to scout ahead. With good route finding this pass has no really tricky, exposed sections—unlike some of the other passes indicated on Buck's map—and if necessary rucksacks can be passed up short, steep sections rather than hauled by rope. The danger of walkers above dislodging rocks should not be ignored—move carefully. Once above the main cliffline the going improves and scrub becomes the obstacle. However, platforms provide rest spots and some of the best views in the Colo are here. Continue to the summit of Parr West.

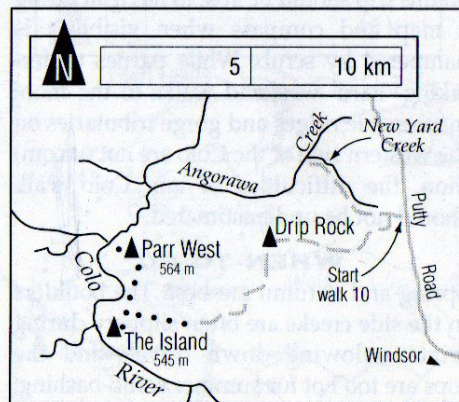
There are alternatives to negotiating Pass 22. It is possible to scramble steeply out of Angorawa Creek and up one of its upstream spurs that lead towards Parr

West. Or the Colo River can be followed downstream for a few kilometres (western bank preferred) to climb out of an easy gully just north of another Colo peak, 'the Island' ('Pass 24' on Buck's map).

Like the surrounding ridges, the summit of Parr West is covered with thick, scratchy scrub. Good views from platforms just south of the main top are worth seeking out.

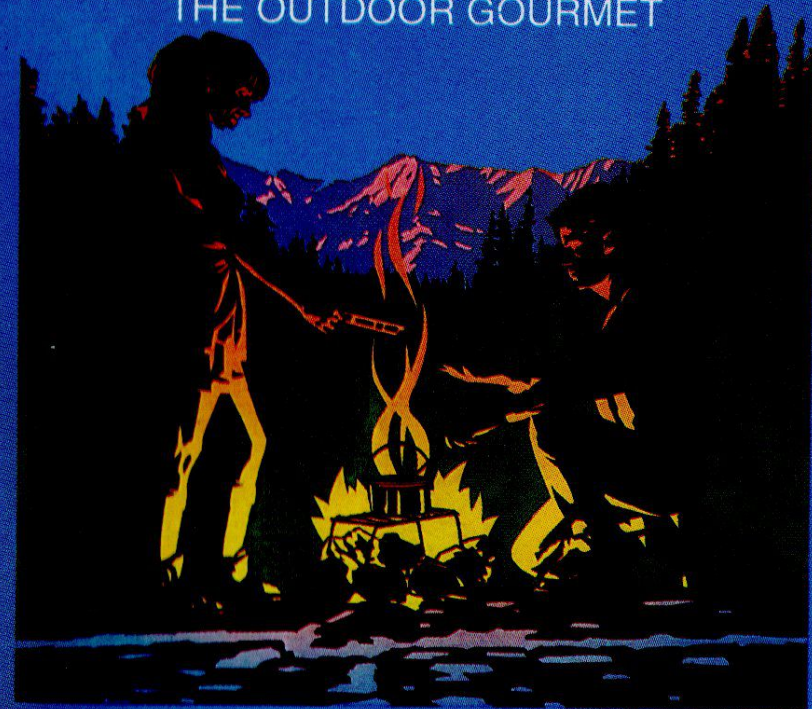
From Parr West there is a choice of two routes back to the Drip Rock road. The fastest and most straightforward is to scrub-bash along the ridge that goes in a somewhat circuitous fashion. Careful navigation is needed to keep to the ridge. The alternative and more scenic route is slower but takes in the major Colo Peak, 'the Island'. It is joined to the Parr West ridge system by a low, scrubby saddle. Rucksacks can be left on the southern side of this saddle while the peak is climbed (outstanding views from the summit and on the way up) and then—after crossing the small creek to the east—a slow, scrubby but easy ridge can be followed back to the Drip Rock road.

The Drip Rock road has few ups and downs and provides a reasonably 'pleasant' road-bash back to the Putty Road. If the afternoon sunlight is fading it can easily be walked at night.



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